

ABROAD

ADDIS ABABA

Army Relief

Long-circulating rumors that relief supplies sent from Western countries to alleviate endemic starvation in Ethiopia are being openly used to feed the armies of Marxist President Mengistu Haile-Mariam have now been confirmed by Western diplomats and relief observers. Ethiopian military forces have for years been occupied in fighting rebel movements in three different parts of the country: Eritrea, where the biggest and most obdurate risings have taken place; and in Tigray and Ogaden in the north and south of the country respectively. Because of the lack of any other transport, army trucks have habitually been used to transport relief foods, which over time have amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars' worth. Now soldiers have been seen openly assigning food shipments to the military, which includes a number of units of Cuban soldiers. Even with considerable Soviet help in the form of weapons and diverse military equipment, the Ethiopians have been unable to deal effectively with the rebels and have even suffered serious reverses in Eritrea and elsewhere.

ISLAMABAD

Soviet Beef

The Soviet Union is increasing its strength in occupied Afghanistan by an impressive six divisions in order to meet what it believes will be sharply stepped-up resistance activity in the winter months ahead, according to diplomatic reports from Kabul. There are already ten Russian divisions in the country; the new troops, of approximately sixty thousand men, would reinforce the garrison against attacks by guerrillas, better armed than ever, to mark the fifth anniversary in December of the Soviet invasion. Additional aircraft are also being assigned to duty in Afghanistan. The three most important Soviet air bases at Kabul, Shindand, and Baghlan are said to have become considerably busier.

SEOUL

The 38th Parallel

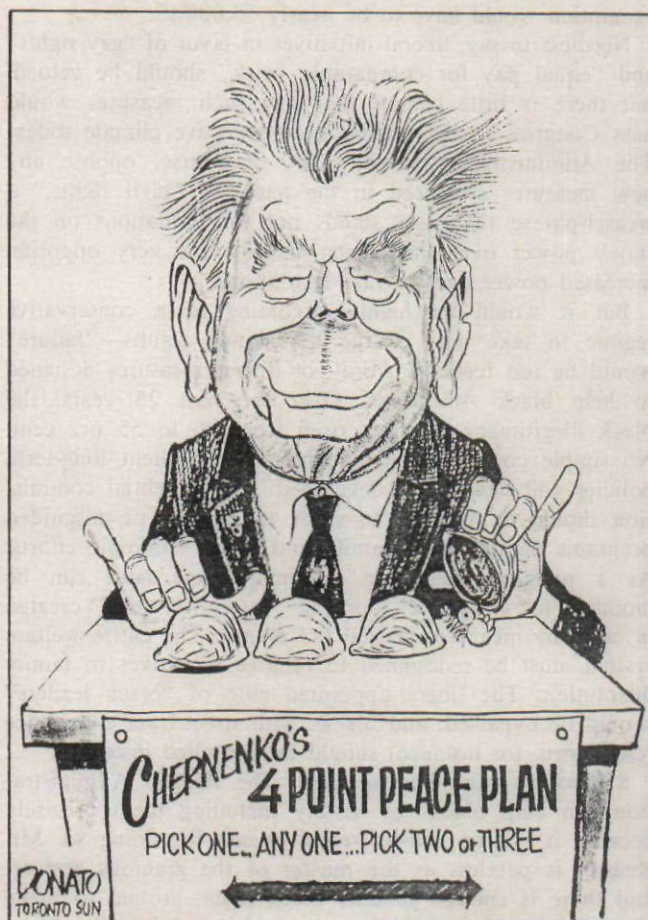
North Korea has agreed to discuss far-reaching economic cooperation with the South, which could have a substantial political effect on relations between the two halves of this divided peninsula. North Korean Vice Premier Kim Hwan has written to authorities here accepting a suggestion to this effect and proposing the two sides send delegations to meet at the truce point of Panmunjom in November. This would be the first official contact between the two Koreas in four years. The North Koreans say that such an exchange might foreshadow steps toward reunification by eliminating the distrust which currently divides Korea. If the exchanges should materialize and develop, North Korea could provide raw materials for the South's sophisticated manufacturing capabilities and at the same time provide an outlet for Seoul's technology and capital goods.

ROME

Art for Take-out

The custom of decorating government offices with art borrowed from museums is widespread in the Western world, but in Italy the situation has gotten out of hand. Accord-

ing to figures furnished by various state and municipal galleries, everyone is borrowing paintings from museums, especially seventeenth- and nineteenth-century canvases. In Rome, for example, seven hundred pictures have been withdrawn from the Museum of the Palazzo Venezia; 69 from the National Gallery of Antique Art (sculpture included here); and 650 from the National Gallery of Modern Art, of which 450 remained in Rome and two hundred went out of the city "on loan" to various officials. Where do they hang? In the headquarters of the Carabinieri, in the National Institution for the Blind, in the National Research Center, in the Court of Accounts, in various financial offices, in the Foreign Ministry, in the Ministry of Forests and Agriculture, in the Court of Cassation, in embassies abroad, and so on. Some of the works have been signed out, some not. Most of these pictures and sculpture are not masterpieces, yet they represent part of the national patrimony and serve as an essential link in the study of schools, styles, and individual talent. And then styles change, and some of these works might one day become extremely valuable. At present, nineteenth-century pictures are the most popular for take-out because, as one art observer says, "They have a lot of history, moderate amounts of sex, and almost no religion." Nevertheless, paintings of the early Christian martyr St. Sebastian, who is nearly always depicted stuck full of arrows, are extremely popular with financial officials and heads of budgetary departments. They evidently like to wave a hand toward the tortured saint on a nearby wall to illustrate their bureaucratic agonies.



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